

# environment and human behaviour an ESRC new opportunities programme



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Policy Studies Institute



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All the projects for this programme were commissioned in late 2002 and started their research by spring 2003. The programme will run until about June 2004. The programme consists of fifteen projects, each of which lasts for about a year. This brochure gives a full list of the projects and contact details of the principal investigators. Summary descriptions of each project and researcher profiles are available on the programme website.

It is crucial for the sound development of environmental policy that it is based on a good understanding of why people behave towards the environment as they do and how these behaviours might change. Both human behaviour and environmental change are formidably complex areas, and their combination compounds the complexity. Interdisciplinary research from a variety of theoretical perspectives is called for, covering a broad range of environmental issues.

The core objectives of the programme are to seek insights and avenues for further research, into the following questions:

1. Why do people behave as they do towards the natural environment?
2. How do or will people seek to adapt their behaviour in response to environmental change, especially rapid environmental change?
3. What public policy approaches might persuade people to change their behaviour, either to mitigate the extent of negative environmental change, or to adapt to it in ways that do not exacerbate it, and to change their behaviour in ways that are least costly for society as a whole?

In addition to the substantive outputs from each project, the programme will increase understanding of the area as a whole and produce advice and recommendations to the ESRC on how it should take this research area forward.



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## Projects (listed by research area)

### Rapid climate change

#### Exploring vulnerability to rapid climate change in Europe

This project seeks to assess the sensitivity and vulnerability to rapid climate change of different parts of society and the economy, and to explore how society might seek to adapt to it.

*Professor Nigel Arnell*

*Department of Geography and Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research*

*University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton, SO17 1BJ  
n.w.arnell@soton.ac.uk*

#### Crises as catalysts for adaptation: human responses to major floods

This project will assess the influence of four major flood events, and their socio-economic, cultural and political contexts, on public policy, and the mechanisms that were used to effect change in public policy and human behaviour.

*Dr Clare Johnson*

*Flood Hazard Research Centre, School of Health and Social Science,*

*Middlesex University, Queensway, Enfield, EN3 4SF  
C.Johnson@mdx.ac.uk*

#### Rapid climate change in the UK: towards an institutional theory of adaptation

This project will seek to identify the key elements of organisational structure and management that could facilitate adaptation to rapid environmental change, and synthesise these into a theoretical framework for examining organisations' adaptive potential in these circumstances.

*Dr Mark Pelling*

*Department of Geography,*

*University of Liverpool, Liverpool L60 7TZ  
pelling@liv.ac.uk*

#### Predicting thresholds of social behavioural responses to rapid climate change

The project will seek to understand how individuals conceive of 'rapid' climate change, whether thresholds of change are important to them, and how difference in social context and background might affect individuals' responses to it.

*Professor Judith Petts*

*Centre for Environmental Research and Training*

*University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT  
j.i.petts@bham.ac.uk*

### Global environmental change and food systems

#### Integrating social vulnerability into research on food systems and global change

By exploring and synthesising different analytical perspectives, the project aims to enhance understanding of how concepts of vulnerability of social aspects of food systems to global environmental change can be integrated with vulnerability concepts from natural science.

*John Ingram*

*NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Wallingford,  
OX10 8BB  
jsii@ceh.ac.uk*

### Sustainable mobility

#### Taxation futures for sustainable mobility

This project will use a scenario approach to explore possible transport taxation regimes that would be effective in changing transport behaviour while maintaining government revenues.

*Dr Stephen Potter*

*Department of Design and Innovation*

*The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA  
s.potter@open.ac.uk*

### Urban systems and long-term climate change

#### Future comforts: re-conditioning urban environments

This project examines social conceptions of thermal comfort in the indoor environment, showing how these have become established, and how more sustainable interpretations might take root in future.

*Dr Elizabeth Shove*

*Department of Sociology, Cartmel College*

*Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YL  
e.shove@lancaster.ac.uk*

### Tourism and the environment

#### Indigenous peoples, environmental change and tourism in extreme environments

The project will explore a range of issues associated with environmental change, traditional (indigenous) cultures and tourism development in extreme environments, including these cultures' socio-cultural perceptions of the environment and the negative environmental and social consequences of this being ignored in the development of tourism.

*Dr J Keenan*

*School of Development Studies/Overseas Development Group  
University of East Anglia*

*Norwich NR7 4TJ*

*Email jeremykeen@hotmai.com*

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## Natural capital

### **Natural capital: metaphor, learning and human behaviour**

The idea of natural capital has become an important component of the sustainable development discourse, emphasising the productivity of natural systems and allowing this to be compared with that of other forms of capital. But understood as a metaphor, it may also be useful for learning both about natural systems and about the various roles played by such discourses in representing them. The project will explore the implications of this for education, theory and policy related to sustainability.

*Professor Robin Grove-White*

*Institute for Environment, Philosophy and Public Policy,  
Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YG  
r.grove-white@lancaster.ac.uk*

## Other research areas

### **Listening to children: environmental perspectives and the school curriculum**

This project will seek to understand how children in a relatively deprived urban setting understand their environment, and how the relevance of the school curriculum to these experiences, and the children's environmental activism, can be increased in a participatory way.

*Dr Robert Barratt*

*Department of Education  
Keele University, Keele University Staffordshire ST5 5BG  
eda21@educ.keele.ac.uk*

### **Tilting at windmills? The attitude-behaviour gap in renewable energy conflicts**

This project will explore the complex human attitudes and behaviour in respect of proposed renewable energy developments, particularly wind farms, thereby deepening understanding between these attitudes and behaviour, and human values and renewable technologies, which may be used to inform policy making.

*Dr John F Benson*

*Landscape Research Group, School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU  
j.f.benson@ncl.ac.uk*

### **UK small firms and their response to environmental pressures**

This project will explore small firms' environment management practices and their attitudes and responses to environmental regulation. It will set this in the context of ecological modernisation theory and the results will generate policy-relevant insights into small firms' environmental behaviour.

*Professor Robert Blackburn*

*The Small Business Research Centre, Kingston University  
Kingston Hill, Kingston Upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7LB  
r.blackburn@kingston.ac.uk*

### **Middle class environmental values in India: an interdisciplinary dialogue**

This project will explore the environmental values of India's sizeable middle classes, with reference especially to their dynamism, complexity and influence in relation to various environmental issues and threats.

*Dr Emma Mawdsley*

*Department of Geography,  
Durham University, Science Laboratories, South Road,  
Durham DH1 3LE  
e.e.mawdsley@durham.ac.uk*

### **Appraisal, institutional learning and sustainability: defining a new agenda**

This project will explore the role of appraisal in the political process, and the ways in which it may help to modify the beliefs, values and behaviour of individuals and organisations, with a view to developing a new theoretical framework for appraisal, and appraisal practice that is better informed by social science.

*Dr Susan Owens*

*Newnham College,  
University of Cambridge, Cambridge CB3 9DF  
susan.owens@geog.cam.ac.uk*

### **Environmental issues and human behaviour in low-income areas of the UK**

Focusing on low-income communities, this project will examine: the relationship between human behaviour and environmental issues; links between locally relevant environmental issues, community action, and wider sustainable development concerns; and the potential lessons for policy to support positive social and environmental change.

*Professor Anne Power*

*Department of Social Policy and Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics, Houghton St,  
London WC2A 2AE  
anne.power@lse.ac.uk*

further details of each of these projects can be found at  
[www.psi.org.uk/ehb](http://www.psi.org.uk/ehb)

